

FACT SHEET

PCBs in the Hudson River



HUDSON RIVER TRUSTEES

ASSESSING AND RESTORING YOUR NATURAL RESOURCES

The Hudson River polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) pollution issue is complicated. Here, the Trustees who are responsible for conducting the natural resource damage assessment and restoration provide information about the contamination, cleanup, and restoration of the river.

For more details, go to the Trustee websites at the end of this Fact Sheet.

Contamination

1. The Hudson River has been heavily contaminated with PCBs from General Electric (GE) since the 1940s.
2. Nearly two-thirds (about 200 miles) of the Hudson River has been contaminated by PCBs, from Hudson Falls to the Battery in New York City and beyond.
3. With repeated contact, PCBs build up in living creatures (including humans) over time. Fish, birds, mammals, insects, and other wildlife (as well as plants) in and around the Hudson River have all been exposed to PCBs. Living resources at every level of the Hudson River's aquatic, terrestrial, and wetland based food chains are contaminated with PCBs.
4. PCBs break down very slowly. They move easily throughout the environment and so are found in river sediments, river water, groundwater, on the river's floodplain, and in the animals that live throughout the river and its floodplain.
5. The Hudson River is constantly moving sediments around, covering and uncovering PCB-contaminated sediments. The river will continue to move PCBs downstream as long as there are PCBs present in river sediments.
6. PCBs move between the river and its floodplain every time the river floods over its banks. The current dredging of river sediments is not intended to clean up the PCBs that are already in the floodplains.

Cleanup

1. Dredging of PCB-contaminated sediments began in 2009 and the work is on-going.
2. The dredging by GE will not remove all PCBs from the river. PCBs left behind after the cleanup will continue to adversely affect the use of natural resources into the future.
3. The plan that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and GE have agreed to will remove PCBs by digging them from the river bottom, resulting in a river that is deeper and with fewer desirable, shallow habitats valuable to wildlife than the river had before dredging occurred.
4. Even after dredging is complete, fish consumption advisories will likely remain for at least several decades. PCB contamination that remains will continue to impair the public's use of the Hudson River.
5. The dredging and habitat reconstruction work by GE does not resolve GE's potential liability for natural resource damages.

Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration

1. Natural resource damage assessments are carried out to make sure that the polluters compensate the public for the loss of natural resources and the services they provide.
2. Trustees measure injuries to natural resources including, but not limited to, plants, animals, water, and sediments, and the use of these resources (e.g., fishing, boating, or watching wildlife).



3. Funds recovered (called “damages”) from polluters are used to restore injured natural resources.
4. Trustees have been appointed to conduct the damage assessment and restoration process for the Hudson River:
 - New York State, Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC);
 - U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); and,
 - U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Public Participation

1. Public input is an important component of the damage assessment and restoration process. The public is encouraged to participate in the process by submitting an idea for a restoration project to the Trustees at the Trustee websites listed below.
2. The Trustees will seek the public’s views on proposed restoration projects in meetings or other presentations, and will release a draft Restoration Plan to the public for review and comment.
3. For more information about what types of projects the Trustees are interested in, go to the Trustee websites:

NOAA: <http://www.darrp.noaa.gov/northeast/ HUDSON/index.html>

NYSDEC: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/25609.html>

FWS: <http://www.fws.gov/contaminants/restorationplans/HudsonRiver/index.html>

To add yourself to the Hudson River Natural Resource Damage Assessment electronic mailing list: Send a blank e-mail to: Hudson-nrda-join@list.woc.noaa.gov

